

I ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. We have seen the subsidies. Some are user fees but some are not. We just bailed out the airline industry because we knew it was essential for our economy. In Texas, we send billions of dollars to the highway trust fund. We get 88 cents on the dollar back. We are subsidizing other States' highways.

I don't mean that I want Texas to have to get 100 percent. Our National Highway System is built on a national system concept. That is what we need for Amtrak. We need to say: Yes, some States are getting more than others. Maybe States should step to the plate more. I would be willing to say that my State should step to the plate and help in these subsidies, just as I think every State that receives service should. That would be a worthy reform.

The bottom line is, this should be a national system that we support as part of our national security, our homeland security, a multimodal system that provides transportation for all the people of our country in a convenient way and in a way that is most necessary.

We have aviation; we have highways. Rail is an important third part of our overall transportation system.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senator from Idaho is recognized.

WESTERN WILDFIRES

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I rise this morning—and I will return tomorrow and the next day—to talk about a story and a saga playing its way across the western landscape that you and I watched yesterday and on the morning news. We saw the headlines in all of the papers that said, Monstrous Wildfires Near Arizona Town; Show Low, Arizona, and The Thousands of Citizens Who Live There at Risk.

What I want to do for a brief period is stage this as the great John Wayne movie "Rio Bravo," where John Wayne captures the outlaw Joe Bernadette and sticks him in jail waiting for the judge to get the town to try the outlaw. It is the saga of the white hats and the black hats.

For two decades we have been playing the white hat and the black hat game when it comes to the management of our western public lands and especially the timber lands of the West.

In the early 1990s, scientists came together and said: "If we don't begin a concerted effort of active management and fuel reduction on the floor of western great basin forests, they will burn in wildfire." That is an exact quote, well over a decade ago, when the experts saw that the lack of management and the shutdown of our public lands would some day spur us into wildfires.

Not only did it spur us into wildfires, the scenario those scientists did not plug in was that during the decade when we shut the public lands down, all in the name of the environment, we began to inhabit them. Every little piece of land that was nonpublic got a beautiful home built on it, as people wanted to retreat into what we called the urban-wildland interface, to have their little piece of that wild west that was left staged in the movie of "Rio Bravo."

The great tragedy is, there is no wild west today. It is an urbanizing West with thousands of people in it wanting to live in those lands that have built up fuel loads on the floor of the forests that are equivalent to tens of thousands of gallons of gasoline per acre.

You and I have seen on the television the last few days the monster fire of Arizona that consumed Heber, AZ, that now has taken over 325 homes, that may take Show Low, AZ, today, rolling on across the landscape, burning up those thousands of gallons of equivalent fuel per acre on the ground. This is so dramatic, the President flies out today to view the carnage.

It isn't just the homes that are gone. It is the landscape that is gone. It is the wildlife habitat. It is the watershed—all gone, not for 5 years, not 10 years, but in the arid Southwest gone for 100 years. Why? Because man in his infinite wisdom said, two or three decades ago, all in the name of the environment, that we would no longer enter the forests. We would no longer thin the forests. We would no longer clean the floors, all in the name of leaving the land alone.

Now we go to Colorado, Durango, CO, where a fire is just a few miles from that beautiful mining town. Between Colorado and Arizona and New Mexico, we have lost over 507 homes this year, this spring. It isn't even summer yet. It isn't even late summer. It isn't the late July and August of the hot weather of the Great Basin timeframe in which most of these lands normally burn.

If this were a tornado, if this were in Louisiana or across Florida, it would have wiped out an entire landscape and thousands of homes or hundreds of homes would be gone and we would have a national disaster. We would have all kinds of focus on it, how tragic it is. But somehow this has gotten less attention, even though the West is filled with smoke today.

It should never have become a white hat/black hat issue. But for two decades, it became that. Right here on the floor of the Senate that very issue got debated. It was them versus us, the chain saw versus Bambi. Bambi won. Now Bambi is losing. Bambi's home is gone. The place she sleeps is gone. The place she drinks her water is gone. The wildlife are in danger—in an area in Arizona where two fires came together, over 300,000 acres. That is an area that is 500 miles square, as big as the whole L.A. Basin. If that is not a national disaster,

I don't know what is. That is just Arizona.

Madam President, 1.5 million acres have all burned in the Great Basin West this year, and here we are just in the last days of June. At this time in 2000, 7.3 million acres burned in the West, and we have already forgotten about it; we had only burned 1.2 million acres.

Well, the story will be continued. Let's call this "Rio Bravo." Let's call this a time when America comes together to refocus its intent on public land policy. I am going to be back with charts and maps tomorrow to visit with my colleagues about this national crisis that burns its way across the landscape of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado because what I am fearful of is, come late August, it will be in my home State of Idaho, which lost a million acres of land in 2000, and nobody talked about it because it was in the back country and with no homes burned. There was no national television coverage to watch a smoldering home. But Bambi lost her home, and Bambi's cousins lost their homes, and a million acres in Idaho today will be decades in coming back.

So why don't we get real and recognize that in managing our public lands there must be a balance. It cannot be either/or or all or nothing because when that happens, Mother Nature is not always the best steward of the land. Today in Arizona, Mother Nature is making headlines and she is calling herself Monster Wildfire. That is Mother Nature, but not in her finest hour.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is now closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 2514, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2514) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2003 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kennedy amendment No. 3918, to provide for equal competition in contracting.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CARNAHAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.